

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 00271 161232Z

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 AID-20 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10

PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 DRC-01 /102 W

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O 161210Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4200

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 271

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR' TS' US

SUBJECT: MASMOUDI ALLEGATIONS THAT USG INVOLVED
IN HIS OUSTER

REF: TUNIS 234

1. WE NOTE THAT GOT EX-FONMIN MASMOUDI IS CONTINUING SEE
FOREIGN PRESS AND ALLEGING THAT USG INVOLVED IN HIS OUSTER
BECAUSE OF PAST DISPLEASURE WITH HIS POLICIES ON CHINA,
NORTH VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA. THESE ALLEGATIONS MAY NEVER
APPEAR IN LOCAL PRESS, BUT THEY WILL CERTAINLY GAIN CURRENCY
ABROAD AND BECOME COMMON KNOWLEDGE HERE. (RANDAL STORY
OF JAN. 14 MENTIONED IN TUNIS 234, WHICH APPEARS IN JAN. 15
PARIS HERALD TRIBUNE, IS ALREADY AVAILABLE LOCALLY).

2. WE ARE CONCERNED WITH THIS DEVELOPMENT AND BELIEVE WE
SHOULD CONSIDER POSSIBLE WAYS TO COUNTERACT IT. MOST
DESIRABLE WOULD BE FOR RESPONSIBLE GOT SENIOR OFFICIAL MAKE
SOME KIND OF STATEMENT LAYING MATTER TO REST. ANOTHER
POSSIBILITY WOULD BE FOR DEPT. SPOKESMAN TO DENY USG INVOLVED
IN OUSTER OF MASMOUDI.

3. PROBLEM WITH FIRST ALTERNATIVE IS THAT GOT FOR OWN
REASONS MAY NOT WISH DISCUSS ANY ASPECT OF MASMOUDI'S
DISMISSAL IN PUBLIC AT THIS TIME -- PARTICULARLY SINCE
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IT QUITE POSSIBLE THAT BOURGUIBA, WHETHER OR NOT HE

BELIEVED IT, DID ALLEGE USG DISPLEASURE WHEN HE TOLD MASMOUDI HE WAS BEING FIRED. THEREFORE, ANY STATEMENT BY HIGH GOT OFFICIAL MIGHT RUN RISK OF CONTRADICTING PRESIDENT. NONE-THELESS, I BELIEVE I SHOULD REQUEST URGENT SESSION WITH NEWLY-APPOINTED FONMIN CHATTI TO REGISTER USG'S CONCERN WITH REPORTS IN FOREIGN PRESS AND AT LEAST TO ASK GOT CLARIFY MATTER PUBLICLY.

4. PROBLEM WITH STATEMENT BY DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN IS THAT, APART FROM OUR COMMENTING PUBLICLY WHEN GOT HAS NOT, UNLIKELY THAT SPOKESMAN'S STATEMENT WOULD BE CARRIED BY MEDIA LOCALLY. NONETHELESS, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD MAKE ATTEMPT SET RECORD STRAIGHT EVEN THOUGH IMPACT HERE MAY BE MARGINAL.

5. ACTION REQUESTED:

A. DEPARTMENT'S APPROVAL FOR ME TO REGISTER CONCERN WITH CHATTI.

B. DENIAL BY DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN, IN ANSWER TO QUESTION, THAT USG INVOLVED IN OUSTER OF MASMOUDI.
SEELYE

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